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ABSTRACT

This overview about research and development for higher education in Sweden discusses the organization of research and development, questions of policy and control, and the nature of the program areas. The research and development department is divided into the following components: research into higher education; followup of the reform of higher education; research and development projects of the planning boards; local development work; and information, documentation, and library. Two thematic areas of these program areas are (1) the relationship between conception of knowledge, subject content, and learning arrangements, and (2) recurrent education. Questions concerning the purpose and direction of research and development activities are handled by several advisory bodies, which are described. Research into higher education are divided into the following problem areas: the role of higher education in society; higher education as a system: structure and governance; the environment and working conditions of research and teaching; and research and development organization and planning. The reform followup program concerns the following main problem areas: the organization of higher education, budgeting systems and the planning of activities, institutional self-evaluation, the content and forms of education, and social effects of the reform. Funds for local development work are intended for development projects and for partial sabbatical leave for the compilation of teaching materials. (SW)

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R & D for Higher Education

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: AV OVERVIEW

1 Introduction

In 1970, when the Educational Development Department was set up at what was then called the Office of the Chancellor of the Swedish Universities, questions of teaching method and didactics were among the main preoccupations of R & D work in higher education. During the first three years of the Department's existence, its work was divided into three programmes, namely research into higher education, local development work and staff development. At the same time, special resources were earmarked for teaching material development and audiovisual techniques.

Since then, an increasing amount of attention has been devoted to the organization of higher education and its relation to the community at large, as well as educational questions in the narrower sense. Consequently, research and development work is now a matter of interest not only to teachers, directors of studies and students, but also to higher education management and planning staff, both centrally and locally.

R & D work is now divided into four programmes: research into higher education, follow-up of the reform of higher education, R & D projects mounted by the five planning boards (see page 5, paragraph 5) and local development work. It also includes information and documentation activities.

Administration of the staff development programme was transferred from the R & D Department to the Administrative Department of the National Board of Universities and Colleges (NBUC) with effect from the autumn of 1976, but staff development allocations still form part of the R & D budget.

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To supplement the above mentioned R & D programmes, special R & D thematic activities were launched in the spring of 1977 in two priority sectors. The aim of these ventures is to make better use of experience accruing from the various sub-programmes, for example by establishing link-ups between projects and study groups which have points in commun but which, formally speaking, come under different R & D programmes. At the same time efforts are being made in both ventures to translate ideas and findings into practical terms.

The R & D Department is now organized on the following lines.

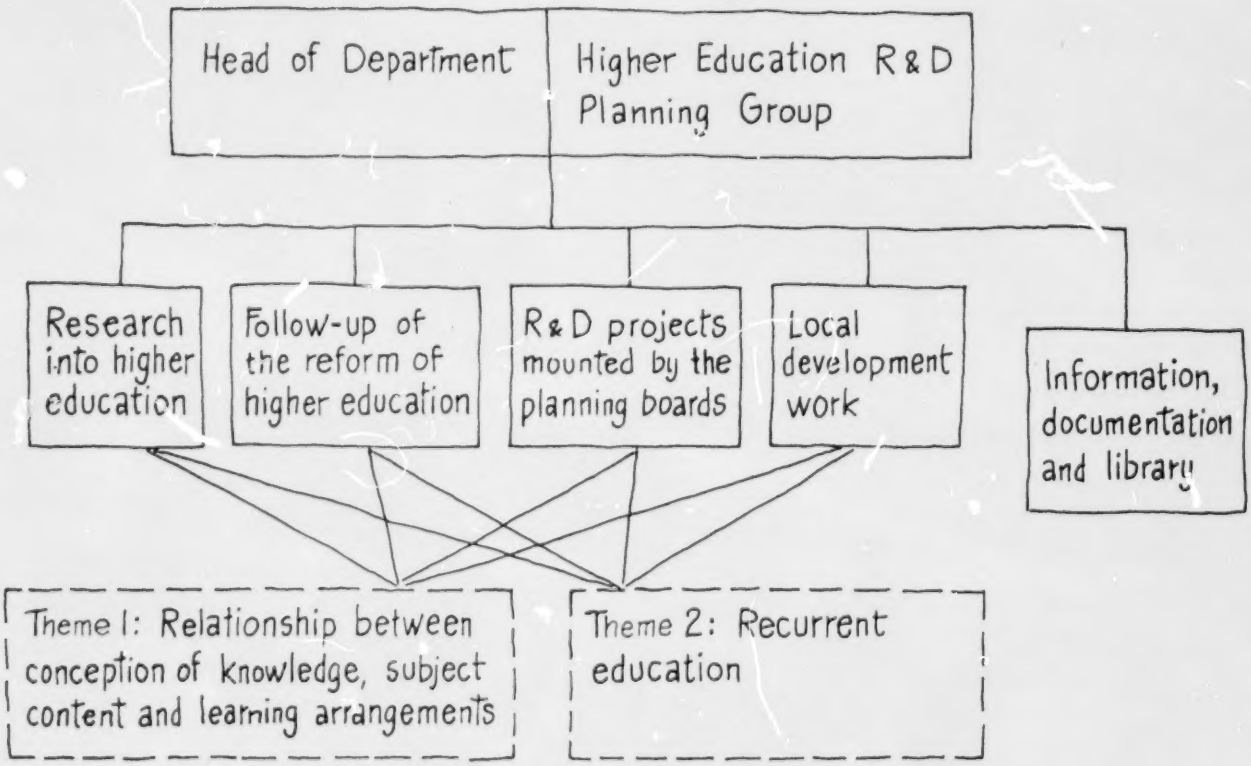
Head of Department
Higher Education R&D Planning Group
Research into higher education
Follow-up of the reform of higher education
R&D projects mounted by the planning boards
Local development work
Information, documentation and library
Theme 1: Relationship between conception of knowledge, subject content and learning arrangements
Theme 2: Recurrent education

Fig 1 The programme structure of the R & D Department

2 Questions of policy and control

R & D is an auxiliary programme for the planning and development of higher education activities, encompassing both teaching and research. The knowledge and experience communicated and developed through R & D should be regarded as a complement to the knowledge development occurring in the course of regular activities, and R & D and its various sub-programmes must therefore be observed, utilized, discussed and influenced in all the contexts where higher education activities are planned and evaluated, and they must also be regarded as instruments to be used in various planning, investigatory and decision-making situations, locally and centrally. At the same time, R & D in its various forms must be assured of a certain measure of autonomy so as to be able, in its dialogue with various planning bodies, to contribute towards the production of knowledge and to stimulate new directions of thinking.

Of course, the efficiency with which R & D activities are utilized is directly dependent on the possession or gradual development by higher education establishments at all levels - central or local - of suitable routines for the planning and evaluation of their own activities.

Questions concerning the purpose and direction of R & D activities are discussed by several advisory bodies. These discussions are an important part of the drafting work which precedes the deliberations and decisions of the Secretariat and Directorate of the National Board of Universities and Colleges.

The Higher Education R & D Planning Group acts as an advisory and co-ordinating body covering the entire range of R & D activities. Established in 1977, this group comprises two delegates from each of the planning boards, and one of its tasks is to hold policy discussions which will furnish guidance in questions of priority concerning various R & D measures.

The programme of research into higher education has two advisory groups. One of these groups comprises five researchers in the social sciences and humanities specializing in research into higher education, while the other comprises vice-chancellors and NBUC department directors. The programme for following up the reform of higher education has an advisory group comprising planning staff from the NBUC and project leaders within the programme itself. In addition, special reference groups have been set up for certain projects. For matters of co-ordination affecting the programme of R & D projects mounted by the planning boards, there is an internal cross-sectional group comprising representatives of departments within the NBUC. These groups participate, for example, in

problem inventories, the initiation of projects or conferences and the definition of problems for entire programmes, and it is also their task to consider current project suggestions. Where local development work is concerned, there is a richly variegated pattern of steering and advisory groups attached to the various universities and colleges.

3 Research into higher education

The purpose of the Swedish programme of research into higher education is to initiate and support the production of knowledge relevant to the long-term planning of higher education. One aim is, by means of analytical reviews and empirical studies, to evolve and refine concepts and models of thinking which will contribute towards an understanding of the organization of higher education and the role of that organization in society.

The development of new modes of description and new analytical methods is a long-term process in which different ideas and approaches are tested against one another in a continuous process of interaction. One of the basic demands applied to this research activity is that the projects must have a sound theoretical foundation. They must be firmly linked to international research in the sector, and they must focus on problems which are also expected to be vitally significant in the future organization of higher education. The programme of research into higher education is therefore conducted without any hard and direct links with present day reform work. In this way it provides an important supplement to other sub-programmes within the framework of the R & D budget.

Activities within this programme are divided into five problem areas:

- the role of higher education in society
- higher education as a system: structure and governance
- the environment and working conditions of research
- the environment and working conditions of teaching
- R & D organization and planning.

Research activities in areas 1, 2 and 4 have been in progress since the programme was inaugurated in 1971, while work in areas 3 and 5 started in 1973 and 1977 respectively.

4 Follow-up of the reform of higher education

The NBUC reform follow-up programme has been mounted in order to study effects of the reform of higher education. Projects are now underway in five main problem areas:

- the organization of higher education
- budgeting systems and the planning of activities
- institutional self-evaluation
- the content and forms of education
- social effects of the reform.

Projects within the two last mentioned problem areas include, for example, "The adjustment of the higher education sector to recurrent education" and "The effects of the new schemes of admission".

The main purpose of the investigations included in the programme for following up the reform of higher education is to achieve knowledge on which to base discourse, debate and possible decisions concerning changes. The intention is for the survey findings to serve as discussion and decision-making material not only for the Government, the Riksdag and the NBUC but also for individual units of higher education. Great importance is therefore attached to the results reaching everybody whose activities may benefit from them.

As a general rule, projects are conducted by independent researchers or research groups, but problem inventory and project alignment are carried out jointly by advisory groups, planners and researchers. In order for findings to be disseminated as quickly as possible, interim reports from the various projects are issued on a continuous basis and are then followed in due course by reports covering wider problem areas.

5 R & D projects of the planning boards

In connection with the establishment of the NBUC and of the planning boards for the five vocational education sectors, special funds were earmarked in the R & D budget for sectoral development work to be conducted in close connection with the activities of the planning boards. The sub-programme entitled "R & D projects mounted by the planning boards" is intended to cater for urgent development requirements defined from the vantage point of central level.

These various development measures are aimed above all at improving the planning and development of general education programmes and at establishing preparedness for new educational requirements. Ventures relating to general/non-sectoral topics also have to be catered for within this programme. Methods vary widely and can, for example, include surveys, conferences, training, projects and experimental activities.

6 Local development work

Ever since the R & D budget was introduced, a great deal of it has been devoted to local development work, and educational development units now exist at the universities and certain colleges.

Funds for local development work are intended for development projects and for expenditure in connection with partial sabbatical leave for the compilation of teaching materials. The content of the projects covers a wide spectrum ranging from studies of the development of teaching and forms of examination to follow-up studies of the interaction of education and working life at course or programme level.

7 R & D thematic activities

The programme structure has now been supplemented by two R & D thematic activities, respectively entitled "Relationship between conception of knowledge, subject content and learning arrangements" and "Recurrent education". The purpose of the first theme is to develop, within a number of subject sectors, models showing how closer insight into the specific structure of the subject and knowledge of the learning process can provide a point of departure for the planning of instruction.

The aim of the "Recurrent education" theme is to collaborate with the NBUC Recurrent Education Group and the relevant R & D projects in elucidating the meaning of the term recurrent education, so as to be able to propose concrete measures in the educational planning context. The intention here is to arrive gradually at a greater awareness of the conditions governing a system of recurrent education at post-secondary level. Essential concomitants of this theme include close co-operation with current R & D projects, the initiation of seminars and conferences and the compilation of debate summaries and discussion papers. Efforts in this context, however, are not confined to policy and conceptual analysis. Another important step is to disseminate ideas within the NBUC and its planning boards and also to communicate them to regional and local users.

8 Information, documentation and library

To supplement the information integrated with current R & D work, printed information in the form of catalogues, information sheets and other documentation concerning the focus and results of R & D work is transmitted to selected recipients within the higher education system and within society at large. The NBUC library plays a vital part in connection with documentation and the retrieval of literature. Apart from continuous library services, the library has acquired growing responsibilities for the retrieval of specially commissioned documentation for departments, committees and, in certain cases, projects.

The NBUC feels it is important that R & D work in the higher education sector be made a topic of study and assessment. Even activities designed to encourage renewal and change are liable to get into a rut if they are not subjected to critical appraisal. One example of this type of study can be seen in a report by Professor Martin Trow, Berkley, USA, "The Creation and Support of a Research Community on Higher Education: A Report to the University Chancellor's Office" (R & D for Higher Education 1977:3). An analysis of the above mentioned Higher Education R & D Planning Group is currently in progress as a continuation of a recently concluded study of the NBUC planning boards. Finally, mention can be made of the studies of interaction between research and planning in the higher education sector as well as elsewhere which are included in one of the problem areas covered by the programme of research into higher education, "R & D organization and planning".

Lennart Levin

1978-12-08

Breakdown of the R & D budget

The following table shows the division of the R & D budget between specific items for the current and preceding fiscal year, together with the specified budget for the fiscal year 1979/80.

Table 1

Research and development work relating to higher education.
Allocations for various sub-programmes in 1977/78, 1978/79 and 1979/80.
Thousands of Swedish kronor (Skr).

SUB-PROGRAMME/ACTIVITIES	1977/78	1978/79	1979/80
Research into higher education	1 760	1 760	1 935
Follow-up of the reform of higher education (+ thematic ventures)	1 470	1 590[1)]	1 620[1)]
R & D projects mounted by the planning boards	2 445	2 470	2 470
Local development work	6 735	3 935	4 330
Staff development	7 855	7 510	9 345
Sundry purposes (information, planning etc)	370	370	405
TOTAL	20 635	17 635	20 105[2)]

1) A special research allocation (D 2) (800 000 Swedish kronor), over and above the regular R & D funds for the same purpose, has been made available for the follow-up of the reform of higher education in 1978/79. The budget requests for 1979/80 envisage a corresponding additional allocation.

2) According to a recent proposal by the Swedish Government (Jan, 1979) the sum total in 1979/80 at NBUC's disposal for R & D purposes will be 17 635 000 Swedish kronor, i e the same amount as for the preceding fiscal year.

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